

# Lesson 9: Distinguishing Primary and Secondary Sources

Unit 1  
Grade 4



# Follow these directions!

- #1s - I am going to show you something. Pay attention!
- #1s - write down or draw everything you saw or witnessed from the moment #2s put their heads down. Include as much detail as possible!
- #1s, when you are done, pass your index card to your #2 person in your group.
- #2s - read the index cards and write a description or account of what happened while your head was down on your index card.
- #2s - let's share what you wrote! We will keep track of similarities and differences.

Similar	Different

# Let's reflect!

1. What made the "Number 1" accounts different from the "Number 2" accounts?
2. How would one explain why the accounts pieced together by the "Number 2" students were different?
3. Were all of the "Number 1" accounts exactly the same? If not, why not?
4. Which accounts should be considered the "best" sources of information by those who are given the task of describing the events of the past – the Number 1 accounts or the Number 2 accounts? Why?
5. What does this exercise help us to understand about the nature of historical accounts?



Raise your hand if you were a number 1

The information that was found on the #1 cards are called **primary sources**.

Raise your hand if you were a number 2

The information that was found on the #2 cards are called **secondary sources**.

Primary Sources are sources of information that date back to the time when an event occurred.

They are often created by people who witnessed an event.

Secondary Sources are sources created after an event has occurred.

Secondary sources are often based on information found in primary sources.

## What are some examples of primary sources?

Primary Sources are sources of information that date back to the time when an event occurred.

They are often created by people who witnessed an event.

Primary Sources can be many things such as: bones, pottery, arrowheads, clothing, jewelry, artwork, photographs, diaries, guns, newspapers, books, devices, ships, planes, cars etc. If something dates back to the time being studied, it may be a primary source.

## What are some examples of primary sources?

Secondary Sources are sources created after an event has occurred.

Secondary sources are often based on information found in primary sources.

Secondary sources can many things as well, such as: replicas or copies of original items, textbook, documentary or movie. If it was created by someone who was not at the event, it may be a secondary source.

# Is it a primary or secondary source?



If you think the example is a primary source, put your index finger in the air.



If you think the example is a secondary source, put 2 fingers in the air.

1. A person's birth certificate.
2. The bus that Rosa Parks rode on.
3. A book written about Rosa Parks 10 years after she died.
4. The diary of Christopher Columbus.
5. A dinosaur bone.
6. A ship built in the year 2020 to look like the ship that Christopher Columbus sailed on.
7. A movie about dinosaurs like Jurassic Park.
8. The original paper containing Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech.

# Here are some facts most people get wrong (but I know you won't!)

## 1. **Primary sources are better than secondary sources.**

- Primary sources are not always better than secondary sources. Primary and secondary sources both have value. They are just different types of sources. But primary sources are considered evidence by historians that make conclusions or interpretations found in secondary sources more or less credible.

## 1. **Primary sources are the first or main sources used by historians.**

- Students often believe that primary sources are the first or main sources used by historians. While it is possible that a primary source ends up being the first or main source used by a historian, this is not the definition of a primary source. In fact, most historians read secondary sources first to get an idea of what is already known about a topic that they are researching.



# Show me what you know!

On the back of your index card, write down the definitions of a primary source and a secondary source and give an example of each.

Name
A primary source is
An example of a primary source is
A secondary source is
An example of a secondary source is